

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal & Governance

Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review Update Report

Summary

1. This report briefly updates the Committee on the work to date of the Task Group appointed to investigate the progress made in delivering Financial Inclusion across the city and asks that a 19 July 2018 Motion to Council on Food Poverty be added to the review remit.

Background

2. At a meeting of CSMC in June 2018, Cllr Neil Barnes proposed a scrutiny review into Financial Inclusion and in September 2018, after considering a scoping report into the topic, the Committee agreed this was an issue worthy of review and appointed a Task Group comprising Cllrs N Barnes, Brooks and Fenton to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf.
3. The Committee also agreed the following remit for the review.

Aim:

To understand the impact of Universal Credit on the citizens of York and the activities being run to promote Financial Inclusion.

Objectives:

- i. To ensure processes are ready and resilient enough to deal with the growing impact of Universal Credit;
- ii. To examine the low take up of the Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Scheme and how this is being signposted to potential customers;

- iii. To determine the drivers behind the increased demand on Discretionary Housing Payments and look at whether Financial Inclusion activities and resources can mitigate any causes;
 - iv. To understand how the various initiatives aimed at addressing the cause of financial exclusion funded by the Financial Inclusion Steering Group are awarded and measured.
 - v. To look at the impact of Universal Credit on families with uncertain employment patterns within a volatile employment market.
4. The Task Group met for the first time in early October 2018 when a way forward was agreed. This included gathering detailed information on the current process, assessing what is available, analysing how various services are signposted and considering the customer journey from their arrival at CYC. They have also planned meetings with key partners including Citizens Advice York and the Welfare Benefits Unit as well as face-to-face meetings with officers.
5. After the review was first proposed to CSMC there was a Motion to Council on food poverty in July 2018. Part of the Motion requests a report to Executive setting out:
 - *the background to food poverty in York including any available local statistics and how local measurement might be improved;*
 - *the current role of crisis support in York in mitigating food poverty;*
 - *a range of options for the Council and its partners to improve the city wide response to food poverty in York.”*
6. This is due to be considered later this week (15 November 2018) at a Decision Session of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health as part of an Update Report on Welfare Benefits and Financial Inclusion. The report recommends that the Executive Member refers this to scrutiny and specifically CSMC to consider in their current review of welfare benefits / financial inclusion, and report back to Executive on their findings.
7. As the Task Group is working to a tight timescale to complete this review before the end of the current municipal year it would seem appropriate to make a decision on this matter ahead of the Executive Member decision and on the assumption that the Executive Member will agree the

recommendations set out in the update report. This will avoid any delay in completing the review.

Consultation

8. There has been no consultation in producing this report. The scrutiny review itself will involve consultation with key partners including Citizens Advice York and the Welfare Benefits Unit as well as appropriate Council officers.

Options

9. Having considered the information contained in this report Members can agree.
 - i. That any decision on the Motion to Council on food poverty is not considered until after a decision on the update report on Welfare Benefits and Financial Inclusion has been made by the Executive Member;
 - ii. That a decision be made on whether to include the Motion to Council in the Scrutiny Review into Financial Inclusion, on the assumption that the Executive Member agrees the recommendations in the update report on Welfare Benefits and Financial Inclusion.

Analysis

10. Should the Motion to Council on food poverty be added to the remit of the Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review then evidence gathered by the Task Group during the course of the review will help inform the Executive Member before any decisions are made.
11. Any delay on making an early decision on the Motion to Council could impact on the work of the Task Group and the aim of completing this review before the end of the Municipal Year.

Council Plan

12. This report is linked to 'a prosperous city for all' and 'a Council that listens to residents' priorities in the Council Plan.

Implications

13. There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Risk Management

14. There are no risks attached by the recommendations in this report. However, there could be a risk to the aim of completing the Scrutiny Review into Financial Inclusion if an early decision is not made.

Recommendations

15. Having considered the information in this report, Members are asked to agree:
- i. that the Motion to Council on food poverty is included in the remit of the Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review:
 - ii. that additional objectives are proposed and added to the remit to reflect the requests in the Motion to Council.

Reason: To progress the Scrutiny Review into Financial Inclusion with the minimum delay

Contact Details

Author:

Steve Entwistle
Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01904 554279
steven.entwistle@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director – Legal & Governance
Tel: 01904 551004

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report